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THE VACANT CHAIR.

A Thrilling Domestic Story.

You have all heard of the Cheviot mountains. If you have not, they are a rough, rugged, majestic chain of hills, which a poet might term the Roman wall of nature; crowned with snow, belted with storms, surrounded by pastures and fruitful fields, and still dividing the northern portion of Great Britain from the southern. With their proud summits piercing the clouds, and their dark, rocky declivities frowning upon the glens below, they appear symbolical of the wild and untamable spirit of the borderers who once inhabited their sides.—We say, you have all heard of the Cheviots, and know them to be very high hills, like a huge clasp riveting England and Scotland together; but we are not aware that you may have heard of Marchlaw, an old, grey-looking farm house, substantial as a modern fortress, recently, and, for aught we know to the contrary, still inhabited by Peter Elliot, the proprietor of some five hundred surrounding acres. The boundaries of Peter's farm, indeed, were defined neither by fields, hedges, nor stone walls. A wooden stake here and a stone there, at considerable distances from each other, were the general landmarks; but neither Peter nor his neighbors considered a few acres worth quarreling about; and their sheep frequently visited each other's pastures in a friendly way, harmoniously sharing a family dinner, in the same spirit as their masters made themselves free at each other's tables.

Peter was placed in very unpleasant circumstances, owing to the situation of Marchlaw House, which unfortunately, was built immediatly across the "ideal line" dividing the two kingdoms; and his misfortune was, that, being born within it, he knew not whether he was an Englishman or a Scotchman. He could trace his ancestral line no farther back than his great grandfather, who, it appeared from the family Bible, had, together with his grandfather and father, claimed Marchlaw as their birth-place.—They, however, were not involved in the same perplexities as their descendant. The parlor was distinctly acknowledged to be in Scotland and two-thirds of the kitchen fire as certainly allowed to be in England; his three ancestors were born in the room near the parlor, and, therefore, were Scotchmen beyond question; but Peter, unluckily, being brought into the world before the death of his grandfather, his parents occupied a room immediately over the debatable boundary line which crossed the kitchen. The room though scarcely eight feet square, was evidently situated between the two countries; but, no one being able to ascertain what portion belonged to each, Peter, after many arguments and altercations upon the subject, was driven to the disagreeable alternative of confessing he knew not what countryman he was. What rendered the confession more painful was, it was Peter's highest ambition to be thought a Scotchman. All his arable land lay on the Scotch side; his mother was collaterally related to the Stuarts; and few families were more ancient or respectable than the Elliots.—Peter's speech, indeed, betrayed him to be a walking partition between the two kingdoms, a living representation of the Union; for in one word he pronounced the letter *r* with the broad, masculine sound of the North Briton, and in the next with the liquid *burr* of the Northumbrians.

Peter, or, if you prefer it, Peter Elliot, Esquire, of Marchlaw, in the counties of Northumberland and Roxburgh, was, for many years, the best runner, leaper and wrestler between Wooler and Jedburg.—Whirled from his hand, the ponderous bullet whizzed through the air like a pigeon on the wing; and the best putter on the Border acquiesced from competition. As a feather in his grasp, he seized the unwieldy hammer, swept it round and round his head, accompanying with agile limb its evolutions, swiftly as swallows play around a circle, and hurled it from his hands like a shot from a rifle, till antagonists shrunk back, and the spectators burst into a shout. "Well done, Squire! the Squire forever!" once exclaimed a servile observer of titles. "Squire! who are ye squiring at?" returned Peter. "Confound ye! where was ye when I was christened Squire? My name's Peter Elliot—your man, or onybody's man, at whatever they like!"

Peter's soul was free, bounding, and buoyant as the wind that carolled in a zephyr, or shouted in a hurricane, upon his native hills; and his body was thirteen stone of healthy, substantial flesh, steeped in the spirits of life. He had been long married, but marriage had wrought no change upon him. They who suppose that wedlock transforms the lark into an owl, offer an insult to the lovely beings who, brightening our darkest hours with the smiles of affection, teach us that that only is unbecoming in the husband which is disgraceful in the man. Nearly twenty years had passed over them; but Janet was still as kind, and, in his eyes, as beautful as when, bestowing on him her hand, she blushed her vows at the aker; and he was still as happy, as generous, and as free. Nine fair children sat around their domestic hearth, and one, the youngling of the flock, smiled upon its Mother's knee. Peter had never known sorrow; he was blest in his wife, in his children in his flocks. He had become richer than his fathers. He was beloved by his neighbors, the tillers of his ground, and his herdsmen; yea, no man envied his prosperity. But a blight passed over the harvest of his joys, and gall was rained into the cup of his felicity.

It was Christmas-day, and a more melancholy-looking sun never rose on the 25th of December. One vast, sable cloud, like a universal pall, overspread the heavens.—For weeks the ground had been covered with clear, dazzling snow; and as throughout the day, the rain continued its unwearied and monotonous drizzle, the earth assumed a character and appearance melancholy and troubled as the heavens. Like a mastiff that has lost its owner, the wind howled dolefully down the glens, and was re-echoed from the caves of the mountains, as the lamentation of a legion of invisible spirits. The frowning snow-clad precipices were instinct with motion, as avalanche upon avalanche, the larger burying the smaller, crowded downward in their tremendous journey to the plain. The simple mountain rills had assumed the majesty of rivers; the brooks streams were swollen into the full torrent, and, gushing forth as cataracts, in fury and in foam, envelopend the valleys in an angry flood. But, at Marchlaw, the fire blazed blithely; the kitchen groaned beneath the load of preparations for a joyful feast; and glad faces glided from room to room.

Peter Elliot kept Christmas, not so much because it was Christmas, as in honor of its being the birth-day of Thomas, his first-born, who, that day, entered his nineteenth year. With a father's love, his heart yearned for all his children; but Thomas was the pride of his eyes. Cards of apology had not then found their way among our border hills; and, as all knew that, although Peter admitted no spirits within his threshold, nor a drunkard at his table, he was, nevertheless, no niggard in his hospitality, his invitations were accepted without ceromony.—The guests were assembled; and the kitchen being the only apartment in the building large enough to contain them, the cloth was spread upon a long, clear, oaken table, stretching from England into Scotland.—On the English end of the board were placed a ponderous plum pudding, studded with temptation, and a smoking sirloin; on Scotland, a savory and well seasond haggis, with a sheep's head and trotters; while the intermediate space was filled with the good things of this life, common to both kingdoms and to the season.

The guests from the north, and from the south, were aranged promiscuously. Every seat was filled—save one. The chair by Peter's right hand remained unoccupied.—He had raised his hands before his eyes, and besought a blessing on what was placed before them, and was preparing to carve for his visitors, when his eyes fell upon the vacant chair. The knife dropped upon the table. Anxiety flashed across his countenance, like an arrow from an unseen hand.

"Janet, where is Thomas?" he inquired; "hae nane o' ye seen him? and without waiting an answer, he continued—"How is it possible he can be absent at a time like this? And on such a day, too? Excuse me a minute friends, till I just step out and see if I can find him. Since ever I kept this day, as mony o' ye ken, he has always been at my right hand, in that very chair; and I canna think o' beginning our dinner while I see it empty."

"If the filling o' the chair be all," said a pert young sheep-farmer named Johnson, "I will step into it till Master Thomas arrive."

"Ye're not a faither, young man." said Peter, and walked out of the room.

Minute succeeded minute, but Peter returned not. The guests became hungry, peevish, and gloomy, while an excellent dinner continued spoiling before them. Mrs. Elliot, whose good-nature was the most prominent feature in her character, strove, by every possible effort, to beguile the unpleasant impressions she perceived gathering upon their countenances.

"Peter is just as bad as him," she remarked, "to hae gane to seek him when he kenned the dinner wouldna keep. And I'm sure Thomas kenned it would be ready at one o'clock to a minute. It's nae unthinking and unfriendly like to keep folk waiting." And, endeavoring to smile upon a beautiful black-haired girl of seventeen, who sat by her elbow, she continued in an anxious whisper—"Did ye see naething o' him, Elizabeth, hinny?"

The maiden blushed deeply; the question evidently gave freedom to a tear, which had, for some time, been an unwilling prisoner in the brightest eyes in the room; and the monosyllable, "No," that trembled from her lips, was audible only to the ear of the inquirer. In vain Mrs. Elliot despatched one of her children after another, in quest of their father and brother; they came and went, but brought no tidings more cheering than the moaning of the hollow wind.—Minutes rolled into hours, yet neither came. She perceived the prouder of her guests preparing to withdraw, and, observing that "Thomas's absence was so singular and unaccountable, and so unlike either him or his faither, she didna ken what apology to make to her friends for such treatment; but it was needless waiting, and begged they would use no ceremony, but just begin."

No second invitation was necessary.—Good humor appeared to be restored, and sirloins, pies, pasties and moorfowl began to disappear like the lost son. For a moment, Mrs. Elliot apparently participated in the restoration of cheerfulness; but a low sigh at her elbow again drove the color from her rosy cheeks. Her eye wandered to the farther end of the table, and rested on the unoccupied seat of her husband, and the vacant chair of her first-born. Her heart fell heavily within her; all the mother gushed into her bosom, and, rising from the table, "What in the world can be the meaning o' this?" said she, as she hurried, with a troubled countenance, toward the door.—Her husband met her on the threshold.—"Where hae ye been, Peter?" said she, eagerly; "hae ye seen naething o' him?"

"Naething! naething!" replied he: "is he no cast up yet?" And, with a melancholy glance, his eyes sought an answer in the deserted chair. His lips quivered, his tongue faltered.

"Gude forgie me?" said he; "and such a day for even an enemy to be out in! I've been up and doun every way that I can think on but not a living creature has seen or heard tell o' him. Ye'll excuse me neebors," he added, leaving the house; I must awa again, for I canna rest."

"I ken by mysel', friends," said Adam Bell, a decent-looking Northumbrian, "that a faither's heart is as sensible as the apple o' his e'e; and, I think we would show a want o' natural sympathy, and respect for our worthy neighbor, if we anna every one get his foot into the stirrup, without loss o' time, and assist him in his search. For, in my rough, country way o' thinking, it must be something particularly out of the common that could tempt Thomas to be amissing.—Indeed, I needna say *tempt*, for there could be no inclination in the way. And our hills," he concluded, in a lower tone, "are not owre chancy in other respects, besides the breaking up o' the storm."

"Oh!" said Mrs Elliot, wringing her hands, "I have had the coming o' this about me for days and days. My head was growing dizzy wi' happiness, but thoughts came stealing upon me like ghosts, and I felt a lonely soughing about my heart, without being able to tell the cause; but the cause is come at last! And my dear Thomas—the very pride and staff o' my life—is lost—lost to me for ever!"

"I ken, Mrs. Elliot," replied the Northumbrian, "it is an easy matter to say compose yourself, for them that dinna ken what it is to feel. But, at the same time, in our plain, country way o' thinking, we are always ready to believe the worst. I've often heard my faither say, and I've as often remarked it myself, that, before anything happens to a body, there is *a something* comes owre them, like a cloud before the face o' the sun; a sort o' dumb whispering about the breast from the other world. And, though I trust there is naething o' the kind in your case, yet as you observe, when I find myself growing dizzy, as it were, with happiness, it makes good a saying of my mother's, poor body!—'Bairns, bairns,' she used to say, 'there is owre muckle singing in your heads to night; we will have a shower before bed-time.' And I never, in my born days, saw it fail."

At any other period Mr. Bell's dissertation on presentiments would have been found a fitting text on which to hang all the dreams, wraiths, warnings, and marvellous circumstances, that had been handed down to the company from the days of their grandfathers; but, in the present instance, they were too much occupied in consultation regarding the different route to be taken in their search.

Twelve horsemen and some half-dozen pedestrians, were seen hurrying in divers directions from Marchlaw, as the faint lights of a melancholy day were yielding to the heavy darkness which appeared pressing in solid masses down the sides of the mountains. The wives and daughters of the party were alone left with the disconsolate mother, who alternately pressed her weeping children to her heart, and told them to weep not, for their brother would soon return; while the tears stole down her own cheeks, and the infant in her arms wept because its mother wept. Her friends strove with each other to inspire hope, and poured upon her ear their mingled and loquacous consolations. But one remained silent. The daughter of Adam Bell, who sat by Mrs. Elliot's elbow at table, had shrunk into an obscure corner of the room. Before her face she held a handkerchief wet with tears. Her bosom throbbed convulsively; and, as occasionally her broken sighs burst from their prison-house, a significant whisper passed among the younger part of the company.

Mrs. Elliot approached her, and taking her hand tenderly within both of hers—"O hinny, hinny!" said she, "yer sighs gae through my heart like a knife! An' what can I do to comfort ye? Come Elizabeth, my bonny love, let us hope for the best.—Ye see before ye a sorrowin' mother!—a mother that fondly hoped to see you an'—I canna say it!—an' am ill qualified to gie comfort when my own heart is like a furnace! But oa! let us try and remember the blessed portion, 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteieth,' an' inwardly pray for strength to say his will be done!"

Time stole on towards midnight, and one by one the unsuccessful party returned.—As foot after foot approached, every breath was held to listen. "No, no, no!" cried the mother, again and again, with increasing anguish, "it's no the foot o' my ain bairn;" while her keen gaze still remained riveted upon the door, and was not withdrawn for the hope or despair relinquished, till the individual entered, and with a silent and ominous shake of his head, betokened his fruitless efforts. The clock had struck twelve; all were returned save the father. The wind howled more wildly; the rain poured upon the windows in ceaseless torrents; and the roaring of the mountain rivers gave a character of deeper ghostliness to their sepulchral silence; for they sat, each rapt in forebodings, listening to the storm; no sounds were heard, save the groans of the mother, the weeping of her children, and the bitter and broken sobs of the bereaved maiden, who leaned her head upon her father's bosom, refusing to be comforted.

At length the barking of the farm-dog [illegible] Every ear was raised to listen, every eye turned to the door; but, before the tread was yet audible to the listeners—"Oh, it is only Peter's foot!" said the miserable mother, and, weeping, rose to meet him.

"Janet! Janet!" he exclaimed as he entered and threw his arms around her neck, "what's this come upon us at last?"

He cast an inquisitive glance round his dwelling, and a convulsive shiver passed over his manly frame, as his eye again fell on the vacant chair which none had ventured to occupy. Hour succeeded hour, but the company separated not; and low, sorrowful whispers mingled with the lamentations of the parents.

"Neighbor," said Adam Bell, "the morn is a new day and we will wait to see what it may bring forth; but, in the meantime, let us read a portion o' the Divine Word, an' kneel together in prayer, that whether or not the day-dawn cause light to shine up on this singular bereavement, the Sun o' Righteousness may arise wi' healing on his wings upon the hearts o' all present."

"Amen!" responded Peter, wringing his hands; and his friend taking down the Ha' Bible, read the chapter wherein it is writen—"It is better to be in the house of mourning than in the house of feasting;" and again the portion which sayeth—"It is well for me that I have been afflicted, for before I was afflicted, I went astray."

The morning came, but brought no tidings of the lost son. After a solemn farewell, all the visitants, save Adam Bell and his daughter, returned every one to their own [illegible]; and the disconsolate father, with his [illegible] again renewed their search around the hills and surrounding villages.

Days, weeks, months, and years, rolled on. Time had subdued the anguish of the parents into a holy calm; but their first-born was not forgotten, although no trace of his fate had been discovered. The general belief was, that he perished on the breaking up of the snow; and the few, in whose remembrance he still lived, merely spoke of his death as a "very extraordinary circumstance," remarking that "he was a wild, venturesome sort o' lad."

Christmas succeeded Christmas and Peter Elliot still kept it in commemoration of him who was not. For the first few years after the loss of their son, sadness and silence characterized the party who sat down to dinner at Marchlaw, and still at Peter's right hand was placed the vacant chair.—But, as the younger branches of the family advanced in years, the remembrance of their brother became less spoignant. Christmas was, with all around them, a day of rejoicing, and they began to make merry with their friends; while their parents partook in their enjoyments, with a smile, half of approval and half of sorrow.

Twelve years had passed away; Christmas had again come. It was the counterpart of its fatal predecessor. The hills had no, yet cast off their summer verdure: the sun, although shorn of its heat, had lost none of its brightness or glory, and looked down upon the earth as though participating in its gladness; and the clear blue sky was tranquil as the sea sleeping beneath the moon. Many visitors again assembled at Marchlaw. The sons of Mr. Elliot, and the young men of the party, were assembled upon a level green near the house, amusing themselves with throwing the hammer and other Border games, while his [illegible] and the elder guests stood by as spectators, recounting the deeds of their youth. Johnson, the sheep farmer, whom we have already mentioned, now a brawny and gigantic fellow of two and thirty, bore away in every game the palm from all competitors. More than once, as Peter beheld his sons defeated, he felt the spirit of youth glowing in his veins, and, "Oh!" muttered he, in bitterness, "had my Thomas been spared to me, he would hae thrown his heart's bluid after the hammer, before he would hae been beat by e'er a Johnson in the country!"

While he thus soliliquized and with difficulty restrained and impulse to compete with the victor himself, a dark, foreign-looking, strong-built seaman, unceremoniously approached, and with his arms folded, cast a look of contempt upon the boasting conqueror. Every eye was turned with a scrutinizing glance upon the stranger. In height he could not exceed five feet nine, but his whole frame was the model of muscular strength; his features were open and manly, but deeply sunburnt and weather-beaten; his long, glossy, black hair, curled into ringlets by the breeze and the billow, fell thickly over his temples and forehead; and whiskers of a similar hue, more conspicuous for size than elegance, gave a character of fierceness to a countenance otherwise possessing a striking impress of manly beauty. Without asking permission, he stepped forward, lifted the hammer, and swinging it around his head hurled it upwards of five yards beyond Johnson's most successful throw. "Well done!" shouted the astonished spectators The heart of Peter Elliot warmed within him, and he was hurrying forward to grasp the stranger by the hand, when the words groaned in his throat, "it was just the throw as my Thomas would have made!—My own lost Thomas!" The tears burst into his eyes, and, without speaking, he turned back, and hurried towards the house, to conceal his emotion.

Successively, at every game, the stranger had defeated all who ventured to oppose him; when a messenger announced that dinner waited their arrival. Some of the guests were already seated, others entering; and, as heretofore, placed beside Mrs Elliot, was Elizabeth Bell, still in the noontide of her beauty; but sorrow had passed over her features, like a veil before the countenance of an angel. Johnson, crest-fallen and out of humor at his defeat, seated himself by her side. In early life he had regarded Thomas Elliot as a rival for her affections; and, stimulated by the knowledge that Adam Bell would be able to bestow several thousands upon his daughter for a dowry, he yet prosecuted his attentions with unabated assiduity, in despite of the daughter's aversion and the coldness of her father. Peter had taken his place at the table, and still by his side, unoccupied and sacred, appeared the vacant chair, the chair of his first-born, whereon none had sat since his mysterious death or disappearance.

"Bairns," said he, "did nane o' ye ask the sailor to come up and tak a bit o' dinner wi' us?"

"We were afraid it might lead to a quarrel with Mr. Johnson," whispered one of the sons.

"He is come without asking," replied the stranger, entering; "and the wind shall blow from a new point if I destroy the mirth or happiness of the company."

"Ye're a stranger, young man," said Peter, "or ye would ken this no meeting o' mirth-makers. But, I assure ye are welcome, heartily welcome. Haste ye lassies," he added to the servants, "some o' ye get a chair for the gentleman."

Gentleman, indeed!" muttered Johnson between his teeth.

"Never mind about a chair, my hearties," said the seaman; "this will do!" And before Peter could speak to withhold him, he had thrown himself carelessly into the hallowed, the venerated twelve-years-unoccupied chair! The spirit of sacrelige uttering blasphemies from a pulpit could not have smitten a congregation of pious worshippers with deeper horror and consternation, than did this filling of the vacant chair the inhabitants of Marchlaw.

"Excuse me, Sir! excuse me Sir!" said Peter, the words trembling upon his tongue; "but ye cannot—ye cannot sit there!"

"O man, man," cried Mrs. Elliot, "get out o' that! get out o' that!—take my chair—take any chair i' the house!—but dinna, dinna sit there? It has never been sat in by mortal being since the death o' my dear bairn!—and to see it filled by another is a thing I canna endure!"

"Sir! Sir!" continued the father, "ye have done it through ignorance, and we excuse ye. But that was my Thomas's seat! Twelve years this very day—his birth-day—he perished, Heaven kens how! He went out from our sight, like the cloud that passes over the hills—never—never to return. And, O Sir, spare a father's feelings! for to see it filled wrings the blood from my heart."

"Give me your hand, my worthy soul!" exclaimed the seaman. "I revere—nay, hang it! I would die for your feelings!—But Tom Elliot was my friend, and I cast anchor in this chair by special commission.—I know that a sudden broadside of joy is a bad thing; but, as I don't know how to preach a sermon before telling you, all I have to say is—that Tom a'nt dead."

"Not dead!" said Peter, grasping the hand of the stranger, and speaking with an eagerness that almost choked his utterance; "Oh Sir! Sir! tell me how!—how!—Did ye say living?—Is my ain Thomas living?"

"Not dead, do you say?" cried Mrs. Elliot, hurrying towards him and grasping his other hand—"not dead! And shall I see my bairn again? Oh! may the blessing o' a broken-hearted mother be upon the bearer o' the gracious tidings? But tell me—tell me, how is it possible! As ye would expect happiness here or hereafter, dinna, dinna deceive me!"

"Deceive you!" returned the stranger, grasping with impassioned earnestness, their hands in his—"Never! never! and all I can say is—Tom Elliot is alive and hearty."

"No, no!" said Elizabeth, rising from her seat, "he does not deceive us; there is that in his countenance which bespeaks a falsehood impossible." And she also endeavored to move towards him, when Johnson threw his arm around her to withhold her.

"Hands off, you land-lubber!" exclaimed the seaman, springing towards them, "or, shiver me! I'll show daylight through your timbers in the turning of a hand-spike."—And, clasping the lovely girl in his arms, "Betty! Betty, my love!" he cried, "don't you know your own Tom! Father, Mother, don't you know me? Have you really forgot your own son? If twelve years have made some changes on his face, his heart is sound as ever."

His father, his mother, and his brothers clung round him, weeping, smiling, and mingling a hundred questions together.—He threw his arms around the neck of each, and, in answer to their inquiries, replied—"Well! well! there is time enough to answer questions, but not to-day—not to-day!"

"No, my bairn," said his mother, "we'll ask you no questions—nobody shall ask ye ane! But how—how came ye torn away from us, my love? And, O hinny! where—where hae ye been?"

"It is a long story, mother," said he, "and would take a week to tell it. But, howsoever, to make a long story short, you remember when the smugglers were pursued, and wished to conceal their brandy in our house, my father prevented them; they left muttering revenge—and they have been revenged. This day twelve years, I went out with the intention of meeting Elizabeth and her father, when I came upon a party of the gang concealed in Hell's Hole. In a moment half a dozen pistols were held to my brest, and tying my hands to my sides, they dragged me into the cavern. Here I had not been long their prisoner, when the snow, rolling down the mountains, almost totally blocked up its mouth. On the second night, they cut through the snow, and hurrying me along with them, I was bound to a horse, between two, and, before daylight, found myself stowed, like a piece of old junk, in the hold of a smuggling lugger. Within a week, I was shipped on board a Dutch man-of-war; and for six years was kept dogging about on different stations, till our old yawing hulk received orders to join the fleet which was to fight against the gallant Duncan at Camperdown. To think of fighting against my own countrymen, my own flesh and blood, was worse than to be cut to pieces by a cat-o'-nine-tails; and, under cover of the smoke of the first broadside, I sprang upon the gunwale, plunged into the sea, and swam for the English fleet.—Never, never, shall I forget the moment that my feet first trod upon the deck of a British frigate! My nerves felt as firm as her oak, and my heart free as the pennant that waved defiance from her masthead!—I was as active as any one during the battle; and, when it was over, and I found myself again among my own countrymen, and all speaking my own language, I fancied—nay, hang it I amost believed—I should meet my father, my mother, or my dear Bess, on board of the British frigate. I expected to see you all again in a few weeks at farthest; but, instead of returning to Old England, before I was aware, it was helm about with us. As to writing, I never had an opportunity but once. We were anchored before a French fort; a packet was lying alongside ready to sail; I had a half side written, and scratching my head to think how I should come over writing about you, Bess, my love, when, as bad luck would have it, our lieutenant comes to me, and sayes he, 'Elliot,' sayes he 'I know you like a little smart service; come, my lad, take the head oar, while we board some of those French bum-boats under the batteries. I couldn't say no. We pulled ashore, made a bonfire of one of their craft, and were setting fire to a second, when a deadly shower of small-shot from the garrison scuttled our boat, killed our commanding officer with half of the crew, and the few who were left of us were made prisoners. It is of no use brothering you by telling how we escaped from French prisons. We did escape; and Tom will once more fill his vacant chair."

Should any of our readers wish farther acquaintance with our friends; all we can say is, the new year was still young when Adam Bell bestowed his daughter's hand upon the heir of Marchlaw, and Peter beheld the once vacant chair again occupied, and a namesake of the third generation prattling on his knee.